

Portals



Portals

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North Central
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This Volume
Is Dedicated To
Professor Barbara Lootens
With Appreciation

Foreword

With this issue, the twentieth anniversary of *Portals* has arrived. Professor Barbara Lootens, who has been primarily responsible for its publication since the beginning, would not say, however, that the days of its inception seem “like only yesterday”: English professors don’t like clichés. What they do like is good writing, and *Portals*, as always, represents a celebration of the best from the classrooms at Purdue University North Central.

The journal was conceived even more than twenty years ago when English faculty gathered at the Lootens’ home over tea and lemonade to select the best from among their students’ compositions. Professor Lootens had earlier instituted our annual Book Sale and devoted some of the proceeds to official Writing Contest prizes. Publication for the yearly winners would soon follow. Student judges then joined with the faculty, the categories divided between Freshman and Open competitions, and *Portals* had taken its now familiar form.

This year, a third category for the entries appears: the John Stanfield competition for essays dealing with humor, literary censorship, or folklore. Susan Bortell’s prizewinner sets a worthy standard in the division for the future.

As another new feature, this edition of *Portals* showcases the talents of some of the school’s best photographers and visual artists, whose work serves to dramatize the portals, passageways, and possibilities that the essays suggest. This additional dimension was one of the first decisions made by this year’s new editors, and we only hope that the choice—and all our choices—can fittingly serve the admirable tradition of this collection.

Editors

Dr. Mary Norton

Dr. Gene Norton

Director of the Writing Contest

Prof. Barbara Lootens

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Up, Up and Away

May the wind welcome you with softness
May the sun bless you with his warm hands.
May you fly so high and so well
that God joins you in laughter.
And may He set you gently back again
into the loving arms of Mother Earth.
(Balloonists' Irish Blessing)

Most people only fantasize about flying in a hot air balloon. The fantasy becoming a reality is unimaginable. Goosebumps, chattering teeth, champagne, propane, and pre-dawn launchings are the things ballooning is made of. Balloonists soon learn to arise early in anticipation of favorable winds and the good wishes of the gods.

In theory, a balloon can be launched from anywhere; in practice, there are some considerations that make some places much more promising than others. An open grassy area is ideal. A city park or school yard will be fine, as long as there are no power lines or trees nearby. Ideally there will be winds of less than seven miles per hour. Balloons do not have wheels or brakes for landing; therefore, the less wind upon landing the better.

The balloon system consists of the envelope, the multi-colored fabric ball; the basket, usually made of wicker; the burner, used to heat the ambient air inside the envelope; the three fuel tanks, full of propane; the fan, gasoline powered, that is used to blow ambient air into the envelope during the launch; and, of course, the three man/woman crew.

The actual launch is a ballet of the crew members. The movements of each member are choreographed and performed with precision. The basket is laid on its side, and the envelope is connected to the basket with cables. The envelope is then spread out flat upon the field. At this point the balloon is just so much fabric, wrinkled and lifeless on the grass. It shows none of its eventual beauty and is much like a butterfly ready to emerge from a cocoon. Two crew members hold the mouth of the balloon open while the fan blows the outside air into the balloon to partially inflate it. Now the balloon begins to take shape and some hint of its beauty becomes apparent.

A crowd has been gathering in anticipation of this unusual event. Cars are stopped along the highway, and people are walking

towards the balloon. The balloon is something mystic in this early morning light, a giant rising up among us. People stand in silence, or speak only in whispers, mesmerized by the awakening of this colorful giant.

Suddenly the pilot fires her dragon. The flame shoots into the envelope with a roar. The crowd draws back in fear. The pilot fires the burner several more times. Each time, the balloon grows rounder and begins to rise. The fan is turned off. The crew holds the basket to the ground until ready for lift off. As the pilot continues to aim the fire breathing dragon into the envelope, the balloon takes shape and the giant butterfly forms above the basket. The only sounds are the whispered comments of the crowd and the occasional roar of the dragon. When the pilot feels the balloon has enough lift, is light enough to fly, she calls for "hands off" and with the dragon breathing hard, she is up, up and away.

The launch is perfect, and the sun is just above the horizon. Goosebumps appear. The beauty brings forth tears and chattering teeth. Soon a deer runs out of the woods and bounds across a corn field. Birds are singing and some are fleeing in fear. As the balloon ascends, more and more of the countryside becomes visible. It is a fairy tale come alive: "We're off to see the wizard" Toy houses, cars, and animals are spread out in the panorama below. Dogs are barking and pigs are squealing. It is amazing how sound travels up. Voices of bystanders are clear and easy to hear until the balloon is more than 500 feet above the ground. The balloon ascends to around 2500 feet. The ground haze is ruining part of the view, and there is no one to talk to. The silence is broken only by the fire breathing dragon roaring every minute or so. What serenity, what tranquillity; the return to earth is not too enticing.

It is hard to believe it is time to begin looking for a landing spot. Two hours pass quickly when such beauty is being enjoyed. Landing places, like launching places, are theoretically anywhere. Ideally a place similar to the launch area will be found. A pasture with clear access to a road, and free of cows, is spotted. A rope attached to the crown of the balloon is pulled, opening a vent, and hot air spills out. The balloon descends and gently kisses the ground.

As the hot air leaves the balloon, the beautiful butterfly begins to wilt. Eventually all air is expelled, and the deflated balloon is put back into the chase vehicle for another day. The chase crew, who have been following the balloon in a van, arrive with the traditional bottle of champagne. There are sips of champagne all around and a general toast to the gods, thanking them for a safe flight and soft landing.

A New Beginning

If there ever was a colorful character, it had to be Lois Tillett. Lois was born in 1895, which was bad timing for her since she was a contemporary woman caught in a conservative era. She realized at a young age that she had to somehow free herself. She caused conflict and controversy among her generation as she fought to free herself from the rigid social rules for women around 1915. Lois Tillett blazed a trail for her descendants by emerging from her social struggle successful in her career and with a dynamic personality. In 1920, women were "to be seen and not heard," discouraged from any career except that of a wife and mother. Growing up from 1900 to 1915 in a seventeen room mansion with a domestic staff and a circuit court judge for a father made behaving like a lady absolute protocol. Coming from a socially elite background carried some stigmas and social expectations as well. Among those expectations were unwritten rules of etiquette, which included the right circle of acceptable friends. Fortunately, she was spared the sting of the Depression in the 1920's since her father had vast financial resources. Money was one favorable point in coming from an elite social circle, but it was not enough of a point for Lois. She walked away from the values and norms set before her as a child in search of the contemporary woman deep inside her.

She totally abandoned the rules society set before her during the 1920's, creating controversy within her peer group and within her family. She used three main ways to break free from her social restrictions. Lois lived a rebellious lifestyle and accomplished this by setting up housekeeping with another woman, Viola Young, M.D. She met Viola at the University of Michigan where they were both enrolled. They lived as a liberated couple for several years. Viola was a doctor of obstetrics and gynecology with a reputation that preceded her in many medical circles. Their lifestyle created a great deal of controversy and conflict within her family, because this type of distasteful lifestyle was seldom heard of in the 1920's, let alone publicly flaunted.

Lois enjoyed indulging in extravagant and eccentric behavior. For example, she and Viola would drive three hundred miles from Detroit, Michigan, to Lois's home town of Peru, Indiana, to buy chocolates from Lois's favorite shop. On one of these numerous occasions, as Lois and Viola were returning home from a chocolate

run, they were involved in a minor automobile accident. Lois's response to this dilemma was far from what would have been expected. She did not respond to the damage that had been done to her car, but exclaimed instead, "Damn, Vi, we spilled the chocolates!" As an adult, Lois indulged herself and those around her. The extravagance she displayed during her lifetime was a carryover from her indulged childhood. Another instance of this was when Lois and Viola would charter a plane and fly to New York for an evening of dinner and the opera. They would do this quite frequently, since they both loved the opera.

Lois enjoyed raising people's eyebrows by exhibiting frequent theatrical rages. These fits of anger were displayed by a wild flailing of the arms and screaming to obtain her desired result. This technique worked for her because seldom did anyone challenge her. Lois used this form of manipulation in the struggle to free herself from the years of restrictions that had encompassed her. This struggle did not hamper her success in her career goals and may have even aided her in the long struggle that lay ahead.

As she fought her way up in "a man's world," she was faced with competing openly for positions of authority. The strong characteristics that developed for her thus far, aided her in the competition. It paid off as she became the administrator for one of the hospitals around the Detroit, Michigan area, a job usually reserved for a man. Later, she became the director of the Public Welfare Department in Detroit, Michigan. By this time, her flamboyance and charisma were also aiding her career. Probably the most important illustration of this was a personal luncheon invitation from Eleanor Roosevelt in Washington, D.C. Lois was invited there as a representative of the public welfare system for the Detroit, Michigan region. Her career accomplishments commanded the respect and admiration of her colleagues and eventually her family as well.

Lois's eccentricities and theatrical flair, coupled with her brilliant mind and keen insight, took her to new heights of success when women were just beginning to realize that they needed to be recognized. In spite of Lois's outrageous lifestyle and personality variations, she served as an example for future generations of Tillett women. She accomplished this by breaking free of the social chains that bound her. She further used the same strengths in her personality to achieve the end result of overcoming the limitations set forth for women in the 1920's. Unconsciously, Lois blazed a trail for descendants in the Tillett family in setting aside restrictive social values and encouraging her nieces and great-nieces to be overcomers and to blaze their own trails.



Connie Szawara

June 20, 1983

June 20, 1983, I awoke out of a restless sleep at 11:00 a.m. It was very humid this particular day, and all I could think about was a nice cold shower. It had been so hot the night before that all I did was sweat. As I awoke, I noticed that I didn't feel quite right; I had minor pains in my stomach, and I felt very uncomfortable. I probably felt uncomfortable because I had slept on a mattress in the middle of the living room floor. My bedroom was on the second floor, and in the summer there was no ventilation. It felt as though I was in a boiler room with the door and windows shut. I moved my mattress to the first floor, only to feel a small breeze from the living room window.

As I tried to get to a standing position, I knew something was out of the ordinary. Although I felt excited, panicky, and fearful all at once, I tried to ignore the fact that something was about to happen. I tried to go about my business like any other day, but ten minutes later I realized that the pain couldn't be ignored. I told my mother that it was time to go. I saw the fear in her eyes because she knew where we were going. I told mom not to worry and that everything would be fine. Before we went anywhere, I wanted to take a shower.

I went into the bathroom, took off my clothes, and slowly got into the shower. Then it dawned on me that when I got out of the shower and went to where I had to go, I would become a new person. I thought it would be embarrassing and had heard a lot about the pain. I started to get nervous. I was only sixteen years old, and sixteen-year-old girls shouldn't have to go through something so frightening and dramatic. I didn't want to get out of the shower because I was too afraid of what lay beyond that shower curtain. There was going to be a new me, a different me, a me that no one had ever met before. I thought of my situation and wondered if I would fail or if I was the right type of person to do this. Even worse, what if I never got the chance to bring out this new and mysterious person within me?

I finally got out of the shower because I knew that staying in there was not going to benefit me in any way. I dried off, got dressed, and slowly walked out of the bathroom. As I expected, my mother was standing there with the keys in her hand. I looked at my mother and wondered what she was feeling. The only

reason she was going with me was because my father had told her she had to.

As we walked to the car in complete silence, I noticed the children in the neighborhood playing in their pools and running through the sprinklers. How I wished that I could be small again! Children don't seem to have a care in the world. All they have to do is worry about what they are going to play with next.

As I opened the door to the car, I could feel the heat escape. As I situated myself in the car, I began to sweat, not only from the heat, but from my fear of what I was about to endure. My mother drove me the three blocks to my destination. She dropped me off at the door and left to find a parking space.

My stomach was still hurting, and the pain worsened as I walked. It felt like someone was stabbing me in the stomach with a butcher knife. At approximately 11:30 a.m., we checked in. A man came to take me up to the fourth floor. This was it! As the stranger pushed me down the hall, I was saddened by the fact that nothing was ever going to be the same again. The man took me to a plain, white room.

For the next three hours, I went through pain that I never knew existed. The pain was so horrendous that I seriously didn't think that I would survive. I thought that nothing could possibly be worth all the pain that I felt on that hot summer day.

Then at exactly 2:35 p.m., I was proven wrong. My daughter was born. She weighed 9 pounds and 12 ounces and was 22 inches long. When they laid her on my chest, all I could do was cry. She was the most beautiful thing that I had ever seen. As I watched my daughter suck her two middle fingers, I knew that the pain that I had just gone through was well worth it.

When I was pregnant, I really didn't think of the difference this baby would make in my life. As I held her in my arms, I realized the responsibility ahead of me. She was going to depend on me for a very long time and my decisions in life are not only going to affect me, but her also. She will always have to be my first concern.

As I held her in my arms at the hospital, I was determined from that day forward I would love, respect, and listen to my daughter. I hope that over time our relationship will be open and secure under any circumstance. I will provide for her and hope to teach her to be dependent on herself. I hope to encourage her to make her own decisions and not pass judgment on her if she makes a wrong one.

I like the fact that I do not have to share her with anybody

and that I will always have someone to love me regardless of my faults. I hope that she will accept me for who I am and not pass judgment on me because I did something wrong. I have a lot of plans for my daughter, and I know that it takes a lot of love, caring, patience, and understanding to make any relationship work. I know that a perfect mother does not exist, but I plan to be the best possible example. I found this prayer in the September 1990 issue of *True Confessions* and it expresses my feelings exactly:

Dear God, please walk by my side throughout my years of parenthood. Show me the right way to teach my daughter how to forgive and how to love. Give me the patience to listen to her feelings and be understanding, as I would want to be understood. Please give me the courage to explain to her why her father isn't with us. And when she asks questions, give me the strength to answer them. Give me the maturity to admit my mistakes openly to her. Please give me the wisdom to know when she is feeling insecure, so I can lend her a motherly hand. Let me know what it takes to be both father and mother, so that I can be a better parent to her. Most of all, give me the tolerance to act not only as a parent would, but, also, as a friend. Amen. (46)

Works Cited

P.V. "My Moment With God." *True Confessions*. September 1990: 41-46.



Susie Halsey

My Tuesday Getaway

For all of you who don't know of the burdens of motherhood, just compare it with working full time, going to college, and trying to fit in studying. Wouldn't three hours to do just what you want sound heavenly? That's how I felt. Three years ago, my friend Bonnie asked me to join her Tuesday afternoon bowling league. I jumped at the chance to be with other adults and to get away from rowdy children, dirty diapers, and crusty dishes.

When you think of bowling, you probably imagine four ladies sitting around in identical blue bowling shirts, politely watching each other bowl and then getting up to throw the perfect ball. This, by no means, described our league. We all had our favorite lucky bowling shirts to wear. Mine was a faded hot pink sweatshirt. My stepdaughter painted Tinker Bell on the shoulder of it, tapping me for good luck. I can't say it worked very well because our team, "The Gutter Dusters," came in last place three years straight. As far as politeness goes, it wasn't in our vocabulary. Quite often we could be heard calling each other "S.O.B.'s," "wench bags," "sand baggers," and other assorted samples of verbal abuse. Since no one took the heckling seriously, they weren't offended. We weren't there to be serious. We were there to "get away" and enjoy ourselves.

We were a lot like a big family. Quite a few of us had babies during the three years I bowled, so we got to see each other's children grow. You know how the women of a family love to get together and gossip. We were no exception. We would walk from alley to alley to catch up on the gossip of the week. I came to care a lot about the ladies I bowled with.

Camelot Lanes, in Portage, is where our league met. We were there to bowl, but there was a lot more happening in the bowling alley than bowling. One lady, Michelle, walked behind us selling 50/50 raffle tickets. At the end of the afternoon, the person with the winning ticket won half of the money collected. Everyone brought in things to sell: their kids' fund raisers, crafts, and Avon. Many times my teammates would holler, "Cindy get over here. It's your turn," because I would be wandering around looking to see what I could buy.

The front counter, which was behind the alley, was a big distraction. There were always people running back and forth

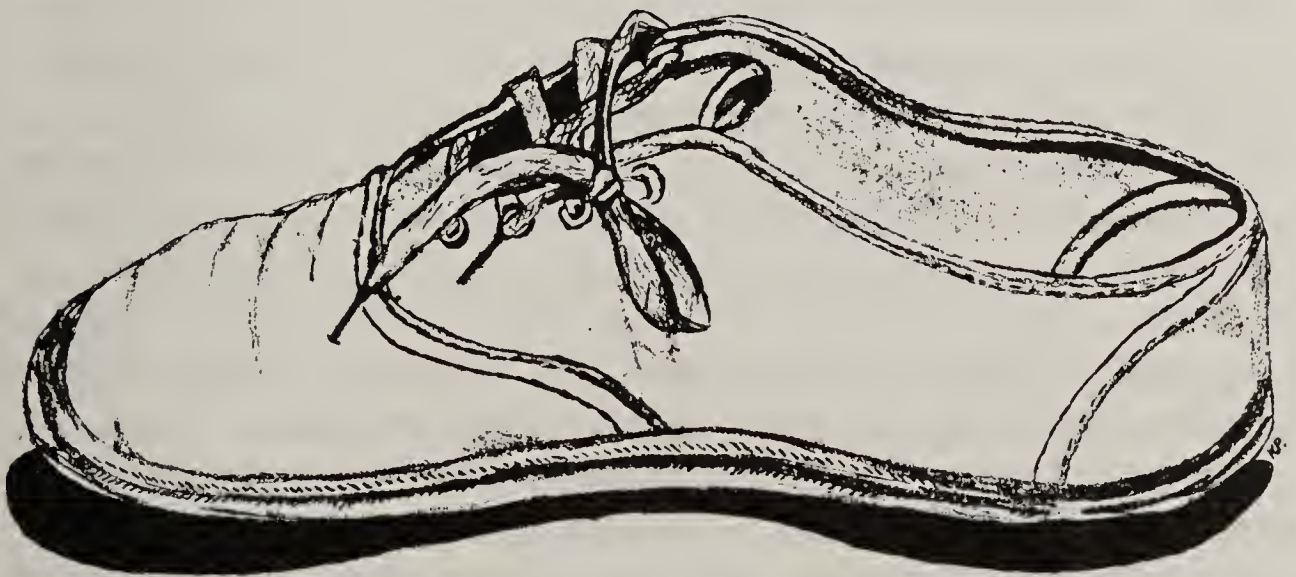
renting shoes and lanes, getting change, and asking for help with the computerized score sheets. Sometimes, with all of these distractions, it was hard to concentrate on bowling.

If you were lucky enough to own your own bowling ball, you didn't have to go on The Great Bowling Ball Search. One of my teammates spent an hour trying to find the right ball. Luckily, I had my own. This ball previously belonged to my mother, but it fit me perfectly. My friends thought it looked like a giant's eyeball rolling down the alley. By the way it was colored, dark blue in the center that blended into a lighter blue with white surrounding all of it, I guess it did look like an eyeball. I wonder if someday my children will want to use it also?

It seemed like the more commotion there was, the more fun we had. Camelot has a bar in it and a few of the ladies liked to have a few too many while they bowled. You sure could tell they enjoyed themselves. We could hear them yelling insults at each other from one end of the alley to the other. And it also was not uncommon to hear, "Mommy, Mommy, I need another quarter," being yelled from the game room.

One of the best things about Tuesday afternoon bowling was the chance to be away from my children for awhile. Even though I love them dearly, I needed that break. They have an excellent sitter service at the alley. I could relax and enjoy myself because I knew my children were in good hands.

At the end of every bowling season, we had a banquet. This is where we ate dinner, received our trophies, and said our goodbyes until the next season. This past May was my last banquet. It was sad because I knew since I was starting college, that it would be a while before I could see my teammates again. I know someday I'll need to "get away" again. I bet you know where you'll find me.



Kelly Pritchett

Lost In Bliss

It was a fine summer day for a family outing. My dad, mom, aunt, my two brothers, my little sister, and I were going to Kings Island. It was the first family outing we had in which my sister was old enough to know what was happening. It would turn out to be a day that none of us would ever forget.

My mom was in an auto accident a few days prior to our trip, so she was not very anxious to begin our journey. My brothers, my sister, and myself, however, were very anxious to go. Dad knew that the trip would help to ease Mom's tension from the past few days. Finally, Dad backed the car out of the driveway, and we were off.

We reached Kings Island about two hours later. We were all glad to be able to stretch our legs after the long trip. I am sure that Mom was the most relieved to be out of the car. Soon after we got in the gate, we decided to meet back at the same spot at noon for lunch. We then split up into groups. Mom and Dad went one way for a long awaited day of peace and quiet. My brothers went toward the roller coasters. My aunt, my sister, and I headed toward the kiddie section of the park.

Watching my sister's face as the park workers who were dressed as Hanna-Barbera characters walked by was worth a hundred rides on any roller coaster. I had almost forgotten how fun and exciting amusement parks were until I began the experience with my six year old sister.

The colors of the rides and the gaily painted vendors' displays seemed to reach out and grab for us. The aroma of the cotton candy and the other scrumptious treasures hidden behind the food stands seemed to be inviting our nostrils to indulge in their forbidden delights. There were more calories and "not before lunches" calling to us and we forgot all about life, strolling deeper into the depths of kiddie land. My aunt took my sister on a few of the rides. I was too big to ride the rides in kiddie land, so I decided to separate myself from my aunt and my sister. I went to buy a few souvenirs from the gift shop. I figured I would catch up with everybody later, after my sister rode a few rides.

When I returned from the gift shop, I could not find them. At first I was a little flustered. I thought that I would never find them. Then the thought struck me that we were going to meet at the gate at noon, anyway. I, therefore, decided that I would

be-bop around on my own for awhile and take in a few sights.

As I approached the meeting place, I noticed my mom, dad, and brothers. There was no sign of my aunt or my sister. I knew that my sister was having a great time and that my aunt was probably having a hard time getting her away from the enticing grip of kiddie land.

Finally, we saw my aunt approaching us. I noticed that my sister was not with her. It was at this moment that my gaze locked with my aunt's. We shared a look of horror and disbelief. We were both expecting to return and see the other with my sister safely in his or her respective possession. I was struck with a brief moment of fear. We all realized at that moment that my sister was lost! I had never had such a bad feeling before.

If it had not been for the cool, level-headedness of my father, we all would have panicked. He decided to organize a search party. Mom and Dad went to the Lost Child shack. My brothers went to the amphitheater. My aunt and I decided to retrace our steps through kiddie land. Our searches turned up nothing. My mother became frantic. All of her worst nightmares were realized in that short period of time. Her baby was lost! I could not bear to look at her. I felt badly, because I felt responsible. When all of our searches were fruitless, it became a massive manhunt. The park security forces joined the search. My brothers and I searched the area where the roller coasters were even though we knew that she was frightened of the big rides. No luck. We returned to the Lost Child place where my parents were waiting to report the grim news. The security officers were assuring my mom that children got lost every day in the park, but they were always found. Those reassuring words did nothing to dispel her fears. Those other lost children were not her baby.

I was sitting on a bench watching all the people go by. They were having a good time even though our day was shattered. The clowns were still clowning; the fragrances were still calling, and the human cartoon characters were still making the children's faces light up. Life at Kings Island was still going on even though ours seemed to have stopped all together. As I watched a set of twins, their grins as big as The Mississippi and as long as the word itself, get their picture taken with Scooby Doo, an idea came to me.

I remembered how my sister had been entranced by the life-sized cartoon characters. I had a hunch that if I followed them, they might lead me to my sister. I told my theory to my father and the security officer, who at this point were open to any suggestions. They told me to go to the lounge where the employees dressed and took their breaks. The officer, in the meantime,

called ahead to tell them to be on the lookout for my sister.

I had regained some of the pep in my step. I just knew that these guys were going to lead me to my sister. The trance-like state that I was in was soon broken. As I got close to the lounge, I heard a very faint, yet recognizable, muffled voice calling my name. "Gary," I heard it say. I looked around but saw no one that I recognized. I started to move on. "Gary," it hollered again, this time emphasized with a little giggle. I knew it was the voice of my sister, but I did not know where it was coming from. As I looked around, I saw a short teenage girl standing next to a very short, ruffled looking Barney Rubble character. I gave the girl an inquisitive look as her finger darted in and out in a pointing gesture toward the Barney Rubble.

All of a sudden, Barney Rubble sprinted toward me with outstretched arms. I had never felt as happy in all my life as I felt right then. I realized my sister, all three and one-half feet of her, was in that suit. I hugged her like I had never hugged her before.

My sister began to ramble on about how the girl had let her play Barney Rubble. The girl explained to me that my sister had followed her for a long time before she realized that she did not appear to be with anyone. Finally, she asked my sister if she were lost. My sister said that she was not. The girl finally got my sister to show her a picture of my family that she carried in her clutch purse. The girl took her to the lounge on the premise of getting her a glass of lemonade. It was then she found that my sister was indeed lost. As the girl headed toward the security shack, where my parents were waiting, she saw me coming towards them. She had recognized me from the picture that my sister had shown her. She dressed my sister in the costume at this point, so she could surprise me. Boy, was I ever surprised.

I thanked her for her help, and at the same time, she thanked my sister for the break from the hot costume. My sister was in such a state of euphoria that the thought of the costume being hot and bulky never entered her mind.

As we were walking back to where my parents were waiting, I asked Kim if she was scared when she was lost. As I looked into those blissful, beautiful baby blue eyes and saw how happy she was, it did not surprise me to hear her answer. "I was never lost, Gary," she answered gaily. I realized in that precious moment that in all her bliss, she had had a wonderful time. At no point did she ever realize she was, indeed, lost. Ah! the innocence of a young child!

Spring of '79

Have you ever had to take a life to destroy the multitude of life growing within? One of the hardest decisions I had to make, for the love of an animal, was the decision of death or the doctor bill of survival. It's a choice that has haunted my soul eternally. Every time I see a little gloss black Labrador puppy with blue eyes, a flashback suddenly strikes my mind with a jolt of energy. Something within those eyes was pain and suffering looking back at me. I wish that I would have chosen the other choice.

In my younger days of running wild throughout the spring, there seems to be the most pleasant of living things. When life is born to all living things such as trees turning green, fish jumping in the brooks, and puppies being born, these are the happiest things to me. It seemed that nothing could go wrong because the heavens above were full of joy and love. There was so much beauty to see and enjoy that it was hardly impossible to see the devil's work until the damage was done. I'm talking about one of my puppies of the past which never lived past one week old.

That one black Labrador puppy out of a litter of five, was the sight of horror that could haunt any child's mind. This particular puppy was infected by grubworms and the common housefly larva called maggots. These legless, wormlike larva had burrowed a cluster of labyrinths on the puppy's belly where little black fine hairs were supposed to grow. Instead, there were as many inlets as there were outlets for the larvae to move. That pup had more holes than Swiss cheese.

As the tears rolled down my face in anguish, I ran to the house to tell my mother and father of what I had discovered. My mother could feel the pain that I was in and she felt bitter. On the other hand, my father told me I had two choices: destroy the puppy or take it to the veterinarian. If I had taken the puppy to the veterinarian, it would've had a very slim chance of surviving. The agonizing cry of the puppy, which was in so much pain, made me feel like I was shot in the heart. I couldn't do anything about it. The decision I had to make was in the palm of my hand. I had decided to ease the pain of the puppy by having it destroyed, myself.

My father and I walked out towards the garden. He was carrying his rifle while I, drowning in my own tears, was carrying

the puppy as softly as I could, just to ease its pain. My father then dug a hole in the fertile spring ground in the corner of the garden. I then laid the blind puppy in the somewhat shallow grave for its final rest. The puppy then tried to crawl, for the struggle of life, for it couldn't see because its eyes weren't open yet. It let out a scream, then a faint whimper. By this time, I couldn't control my body's actions. As I started to shake with fear, my eyes were almost free-floating in the back of my head. At the sound of a click of the rifle, I knew the time had come to end the puppy's pain which I felt so deeply in my heart. When the rifle fired and the smoke cleared, there was a thunder that shook the ground. That thunder was my heart as it blew up into a million pieces. The impact of the bullet forced that little puppy's eye-lids open. Within a flash, a mean white streak shot out of my spine while I was standing paralyzed with the prettiest sky blue eyes staring directly in the hollow point of my eyes. Not a sound was made, but the tears kept pouring out. For the rest of spring, it wasn't so beautiful any more.



Connie Szawara

Teaching in My Imaginary World

When I was little, one of my favorite pastimes was pretending to be a teacher. My sister and I would spend hours “teaching” our dolls about the many mysteries of math, science, and reading. As she grew older, my sister decided to continue her favorite pastime by studying to become a real teacher. She soon found out that teaching in real life was nothing like teaching in pretend life.

When she first told our family that her major was going to be Education, they were appalled. “How could such an intelligent person choose such a career?” they asked. My grandfather went as far as to say that she was wasting her God given potential by not choosing a professional career. Yet teaching is a profession, and teachers are professionals.

In 1988, the average starting salary for teachers was \$19,000. That same year, the average starting salaries for engineers was \$29,000, for accountants \$24,000 (U.S. Census Bureau 232). Each of these three careers requires bachelor’s degrees and state certification. This means that each of these professionals attended college for four years and then took a state test.

Why in our society is there such a gap in pay? Where would all the engineers and accountants be without teachers? A teacher can become a teacher without ever utilizing an accountant or engineer. Yet it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find even one accountant or engineer who had accomplished their professional standing without a teacher.

Without teachers, America would quickly fall behind the rest of the industrial world. Who would teach the future rocket designers that $E = mc^2$ and $C^2 = A^2 + B^2$? America would continue for awhile, but as more and more Americans died, who would be left to take over?

If I could, I would build an imaginary world for my sister to teach in. In my imaginary world, teachers would be treated as equal, if not superior, to other professionals. In my imaginary world, teachers would begin their career making \$30,000, while engineers began their careers making \$19,000.

In my imaginary world, the saying, “Those who can, do; those who can’t, teach!” would never be uttered. People would know

that it takes extreme amounts of patience, understanding, and creativity to stand in front of 22 eight-year-olds for 180 days a year and teach them the mysteries of math, science, and reading. People would know that not one of them would be in the position they were in if it weren't for a caring teacher that made clear these mysteries for them.

In my imaginary world, teachers would have the power to say how their classrooms were run. Teachers would not have to answer to authorities that spent little, if any, time in the classroom. Teachers would become their own authorities. Teachers would form their own support societies that could be turned to in times of need.

In my imaginary world, teachers would be exempt from such inane practices as "covering the book." Teachers would be able to concentrate on helping students learn and understand. Teachers would be judged on what their students actually understood, not just how many facts the students were able to memorize.

In my imaginary world, the smartest and brightest students would strive to become teachers. The top universities in the country would recruit these students much the same as athletes are recruited today. Special scholarships would be offered to entice these students to continue their studies in teaching.

In my imaginary world, all universities that offered education majors would be equipped to properly prepare future teachers for "life in the classroom." These universities would have teaching labs where students would get more than just twelve weeks of practice teaching. In these universities, teachers would spend more time in classes learning more about the actual subjects they would be teaching rather than simply observing various methods to teach these subjects.

Most of all, in my imaginary world, teaching would be regarded as the noble profession that it is. Students studying to become teachers would not be regarded as wasting their potential. They would be regarded as living up to their potential by entering one of the most respected professions on earth.

My imaginary world may seem far-fetched, but is it really? Everyone readily admits that we need teachers. In my imaginary world, this need would be readily filled by competent professionals who were respected for what they did.

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Order Out of Chaos

In *A History of Philosophy*, Father Frederick Copleston states that "...it is a mistake to place a greater emphasis on the influence of medieval conditions on St. Thomas than on the influence of the Christian religion as such, which did not grow up in the Middle Ages and is not confined to the Middle Ages" (133). He maintains, in regard to St. Thomas Aquinas' moral and political theories being based philosophically in Aristotle's moral theory, that although Aquinas considered the subject-matter in light of the Christian medieval outlook, the conflicts inherent in his theories were the result of "...the confrontation of two different conceptions of man and his destiny; its precise formulation at any given time or by one thinker is incidental" (133). However, assuming that one's outlook and ideas are a direct result of one's life experience and education, and considering the chaotic condition of the social, political, and religious influences on St. Thomas, it seems unlikely that his philosophy and theology were incidental to, and not greatly, even emphatically, influenced by the Middle Ages.

Aquinas was subject to opposing ideas of philosophy, based on reason, and theology, based on revelation, as well as the conflicting concepts of Scholasticism and mysticism, pagan beliefs and Christianity, Empire (state, or political control) and Church (religious control), and social cohesion and individual pursuits. A sensible synthesis of antithetical ideas through adaptation and assimilation was a goal shared by medieval writers of romance as well as those who practiced the art of biblical exposition. Eugene Vinaver, in *The Rise of Romance*, writes of the discovery of meaning in relation to writers during the Middle Ages:

Any work of adaptation—which, in medieval terms, is to all intents and purposes synonymous with what we would call a work of literature—must then...depend for its success on a judicious use of two devices: the discovery of the meaning implicit in the matter, and the insertion of such thoughts (sen) as might adorn, or be read into, the matter.... What a good romance writer is expected to do, then...is to reveal the meaning of

the story, adding to it such embellishing thoughts as he considers appropriate.... This craft, however, like the art of biblical exposition, was the product not so much of learning as of certain habits of mind acquired through learning.... What can hardly be denied is the common intellectual origin of the interpretative nature of romance on the one hand and of the exegetic tradition on the other. Both reflect the teaching provided by the great cathedral schools of France in the twelfth century. (16-18)

Aquinas' contribution to literature consisted of his adaptation of the existing moral theory of Aristotle, which dealt with humankind's acquisition of happiness in this life, and the addition of his idea of the possibility of humankind's happiness in the afterlife. St. Thomas referred to Aristotle's idea of happiness in the natural world as temporal, or imperfect happiness, and expressed his belief in the importance of its attainment while in this life. He then added his conviction of the importance of striving for supernatural, or perfect happiness, to be attained in the afterlife through a vision of the divine essence. Aristotle and Aquinas both believed that happiness is achieved through wisdom, which is acquired through contemplation. According to Aristotle, the philosopher is the truly happy person. Aquinas goes further and states that through contemplation of the divine essence humans can achieve the perfect happiness, or beatitude.

St. Thomas is in agreement with Aristotle's moral theory as far as it is stated, in other words, in regard to this life on earth. He then continues on to consider the next life and what would be necessary for the attainment of happiness there: "Beatitude would consist principally in the natural knowledge and love of God attainable in this life (imperfect natural beatitude) and in the next life (perfect natural beatitude). Those actions would be good which lead to or are compatible with the attainment of such beatitude, while those actions would be bad which are incompatible with such beatitude" (Copleston 120-21). What Aquinas does, in proposing his moral theory, is take the only complete moral theory known to the Middle Ages and add to it the aspect of Catholic revelation. He does not interpret or change Aristotle's basic premise, but adapts it as the basis of a revelatory philosophy. When speaking of thirteenth century prose writers, Vinaver says:

...they too wanted to make the narrative more meaningful by giving it a causal perspective; but the method they adopted was a typically thirteenth-century one, paralleled in several other aspects of late medieval thought and imagination. It consisted less in explaining the action...than in forging links between originally independent episodes; it aimed at establishing, or at least suggesting, relationships between hitherto unrelated themes; it illustrated...the scholastic principle of manifestatio. (68)

Similarly, when Bertrand Russell speaks of St. Thomas, he states, "The originality of Aquinas is shown in his adaptation of Aristotle to Christian dogma, with a minimum of alteration... He was even more remarkable for systematizing than for originality... He knows Aristotle well, and understands him thoroughly, which cannot be said of any earlier Catholic philosopher" (461-2). In regard to Aquinas' theological treatise, *Summa Theologica*, Frank Magill says,

...St. Thomas gave credit for ideas and lines of thought to many earlier thinkers, and he found the seeds of much thirteenth century belief in the works of previous philosophers. His work, then, is in the nature of a summary of past thinking on the highest subjects and a setting forth of the highest principles of Christian theology as he was able to formulate them from this past material and from his own conviction and thinking. (832)

Considering the strong similarities between scholastic and artistic writing in the Middle Ages, as well as creative commonalities in general, it seems unlikely that the medieval influence was not as much, if not more of, a factor in St. Thomas Aquinas' philosophical and theological writings than Christianity. Granted, if taken out of his place in time, he would certainly still be considered a great philosopher-theologian, just as Cretien de Troyes or Dante would have been great artists in whatever time period they had lived. "Because they tower so far above their contemporaries, great philosophers, like great artists, are apt to be little understood or appreciated in their own day. Their true stature becomes visible only when they are seen from a distance, like peaks rising above a mountain range. So it is with St. Thomas Aquinas" (Maurer 189). The intellectual education available in the Middle

Ages and the desire to take what knowledge they had and make sense out of a chaotic society by adapting that store of knowledge to their own thoughts and experiences were what made Aquinas', as well as other medieval literature, great enough to stand the test of time. It is a mistake to imagine that St. Thomas' philosophy is more a product of Christian beliefs than of the time in which he lived, or that the Middle Ages were incidental to the formulation of his concepts. While it is a cliché to say that, "we can only know what we know," it is, nevertheless, true. Without the influence of the medieval quest for order through wisdom, and taken out of the cosmology of the Middle Ages, Aquinas would very likely still have been a great philosopher. It is also likely, though, that his writings would have been very different, even if the Christian influence had been the same.

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Connie Szawara

When Two Worlds Collide

A world consists of its inhabitants' collective perception of stimuli and the manifestations of those perceptions. A world's force consists of the strength of its inhabitants' convictions. In David G. Hartwell's *Masterpieces of Fantasy and Enchantment*, many opposing worlds have been established: the world of mortals and the nonhuman world, the worlds of slavery and freedom, the world of faith and the world of reason, the scientific world and the fantasy world, the worlds of past and present, the world of magic and the world of technology, the worlds of youth/innocence and age/wisdom. At the conjunction of any two opposing worlds, "...unlike closing with unlike across whatever likeness may be found..." (Charnas 120), there are four possible scenarios. In the first, integration and coexistence take place after the collision as a result of inhabitants' altered perceptions. In the second, the force of the opposing worlds is equal and, after the conjunction, the worlds veer off into their continued separate existences, but not before inhabitants of each have had an effect on each other as a result of altered perceptions. In the third, the force of the opposing worlds is equal and, after the collision, the worlds veer off into their continued separate existences with no effect on each other. In the fourth, one world is dominant and, after the collision, the stronger force either establishes control over, destroys, or engulfs the other.

Ray Bradbury's "Uncle Einar" is an example of the first scenario. The collision between the nonhuman world, which Bradbury refers to as "the Family" (311), and the world of mortals, takes place when Uncle Einar is cracked and sizzled out of the night sky by a high-tension tower and loses his ability to fly (311-12). Rather than calling on members of the Family for help in getting home, Einar finds the world of mortals attractive enough to marry into, and begins to change his habits and adjust his outlook in order to exist in Brunilla's world while retaining his nonhuman qualities. Brunilla is delighted with her nonhuman husband, and eagerly adjusts her surroundings as well as her thoughts to make him feel comfortable in her world. Their marriage is the symbol of the integration and successful coexistence of the two worlds. As Bradbury puts it, "The marriage took" (314).

Another example of the first scenario is "Of Age and Wisdom."

Mei-Chou's world of youth/innocence collides with Lord Chu's world of age/wisdom when Lord Chu attacks Han Chung-Li in his effort to protect Mei-Chou (4). The kitten had always scoffed at Chu-Chu's tales of past glories, as youth sometimes does. The violent confrontation between her mentor and the dragon leaves her paralyzed at first and then hysterical (4,6). Mei-Chou's new knowledge of Lord Chu's past existence alters her perception of him and of her responsibility to him (8). The kitten gaining knowledge from this experience symbolizes the gradual integration of the opposing worlds of youth/innocence and age/wisdom, which must take place for the former to become the latter.

In the second scenario, the existence of inhabitants of each world is altered through multiple simultaneous perceptions, but without integration and coexistence. Suzy McKee Charnas' "The Unicorn Tapestry" illustrates this possibility. In this story, Weyland's nonhuman vampire world and Floria's human world can't integrate and coexist because the opposing forces are of equal strength and could destroy each other. If Weyland becomes too empathetic toward humans, his existence will be threatened by his inability to hunt (106), and once Floria knows everything about his world, her existence is threatened by Weyland's fear of leaving her alive to tell someone else (116). Yet these two inhabitants of opposing worlds are drawn to each other and moved by each other through their mutual respect for their strengths. So drawn to and moved by each other that they share an intimacy dangerous to both, "...a rich complicity..." (123), a conjunction of the two worlds, which results in "Newly discovered capacities..." (122) for each to take with them when they return to their opposing worlds and continue to live their separate, but altered, existences.

In the third scenario, the opposing worlds are of equal strength and continue separate existences after collision but with no effect on each other. One example of this possibility is Samuel R. Delaney's "The Tale of Dragons and Dreamers." In this story, the world of slavery and the world of freedom are not only equal in strength, they are also dependent on each other for their existence. The slaves run the castle efficiently so the lords and owners can enjoy an aristocratic lifestyle, and the owners' need of the slaves' skills in running a complex house keeps the slaves from having to find work in the cities and towns where the urban class has no need for their particular skills (437). The collision of the two worlds is seen in the battles Sarg and Gorgik fight in each of the seven castles as they attempt to alter the world of freedom by

eliminating the world of slavery. Delaney hints, however, that even while Gorgik fights to change the balance, he is aware of the impossibility of his efforts, as he tells Sarg, "We have our campaign, master—to free slaves and end the institution's inequities. The lords of Neveryon have their campaign.... What you and I know, or should know by now, is how little our campaigns actually touch...though in place after place they will come close enough so that no man or woman can slip between without encounter, if not injury" (446).

Another illustration of the third scenario is "Elric at the End of Time" by Michael Moorcock. Elric's presence at the End of Time is the conjunction of the fantasy world, of which he is an inhabitant, and the world of science. The total impossibility of the coexistence of these two worlds is portrayed by the fact that after he's returned to the fantasy world, Elric's memory of his time in the scientific world will be vague recollections available to him only in his dreams (527).

In the fourth scenario, one world is dominant and either establishes control over, engulfs, or destroys inhabitants of the opposing force. Stories in this category include Lord Dunsany's "Sword of Welleran," Poul Anderson's "Operation Afreet," A. Merritt's "The Moon Pool," and "The Eyeless Dragons" by Kenneth Morris. In "Sword of Welleran," the world of the past, the heroic battle tradition of Merimna, is set in opposition to the world of the present, the youthful questioning of the integrity of the legendary battle heroes. After the battle between Merimna's army and the tribes of the outlying cities, Rold leads the city's young men in establishing control over the legends of the past by crying over the horrible destruction of battle and declaring that the spirit and sword of Welleran will never do battle again because the sword is in his hands now (592).

In "Operation Afreet," the worlds of technology and magic appear at first to be coexisting in the context of military operations. As the story proceeds, however, it becomes clear that magic is always under the control of and manipulated by technology, the only exception being the afreet. The collision of the two worlds takes place between Virginia, who seems to be expert in the Social Sciences, and the genie, personifying magic unleashed. Virginia establishes total control over the afreet by rendering him helpless and making him a prisoner in his bottle through the use of psychological theory (622).

In "The Moon Pool," the world of magic renders the world of science helpless by engulfing those inhabitants of the scientific

world who dare to attempt control. As the battle between these opposing forces proceeds, the power of the Pool is so inexorable that it is able to establish and maintain control over the scientific mind of Dr. Throckmartin even before it engulfs him physically (578). In "The Eyeless Dragons," the collision between opposing forces also ends in physical destruction. Here the battle takes place between faith/inspiration and reason/skill. The dominance of the world of faith/inspiration is symbolized by the destruction of Lu-Chao, who stubbornly refuses to renounce the material in favor of the spiritual possibilities of art.

When any two opposing forces, any two belief systems, any two worlds collide, several possibilities exist. In some cases enough similarities may be discovered to enable inhabitants of each world to coexist successfully. In other cases the dissimilarity is too strong to allow coexistence, but a change in perception may take place after the conjunction which allows inhabitants of separate worlds an improved existence. Sometimes the opposing forces may discover that in order to continue to exist, the two worlds must continue in opposition to each other. At other times the force of the dominant world overpowers the weaker convictions of the inhabitants of the other world. The commonality of these different scenarios lies in the fact that any time the convictions of a person or group of people, arrived at through their perceptions of stimuli, come up against opposing convictions, some change will take place in one or both worlds, even if it's only the continued knowledge of the impossibility of alteration.

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The Role of Predestination and Free Will in Medieval Romance and Mock Epic

Predestination and free will are forces that are integral parts of human existence and influence the way life is resolved. In the Medieval romances *Perceval*, *Tristan and Isolt*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and the mock epic "The Nun's Priest's Tale" from the *Canterbury Tales*, the exercising of free will has both significant and inconsequential effect on the completion and fulfillment of the destiny that has been established. In the cycle of events that combine to fulfill destiny, the possibility for the characters to use free will is greatly affected by outside forces beyond their control. Predestination is not a choice or option the characters have, but rather it is imposed upon them by someone else. On the other hand, free will is a conscious exercising of the mind to make choices. Free will is an internal force, whereas predestination is an external one. However, the critical element involved with free will is that it is only as good as the mind behind it. Together, these forces have profound impact on the characters and events in the Medieval romances and mock epic stated above.

Predestination is established in all four works and, with the exception of "The Nun's Priests' Tale," is fully realized in the conclusion. In Chretien's *Perceval*, Perceval's destiny is established almost immediately when he decides, of his own free will, to leave his mother and become a knight. This is evidenced when Perceval has his first encounter with knights from Arthur's court. He says to them, "If only I could be like you..." (11). Perceval is so entranced by the knights' appearance that he decides he will become a knight, which he tells his mother: "... I want to go to the king who makes knights, and I will go..." (16). Clearly, Perceval has willingly decided to leave the shelter his mother has given him to venture into a realm of which he has no knowledge or experience. Perceval's decision fulfills a destiny that he is to become a knight. His mother explains this to him: "There was no knight so honored and so feared, fair son, as your father....You can boast indeed that neither his lineage nor mine is a disgrace to you, for I am descended from the best knights in this country" (15). She also tells him that "You will go to the court of the king and ask

him to give you arms. There will be no refusal; I know he will give them to you" (16). This illustrates that Perceval was indeed predestined to become a knight, but only after his decision is made is the destiny fulfilled. Undoubtedly, it was predestined that Perceval meet the knights, for if he hadn't, he would not know of them and would not have fulfilled his destiny.

In von Strassburg's *Tristan and Isolt*, the title characters are predestined to become lovers. In the first half of the story, von Strassburg establishes this destiny by illustrating Isolt's hatred of Tristan and his displeasure with her. This is brought about as a consequence of Tristan's slaying of Isolt's uncle, Morolt. When a fragment of Tristan's sword is left embedded in Morolt's skull, this later becomes Tristan's undoing and Isolt's primary reason for hating him. This is evidenced when the author says, "...then the maiden's heart grew cold within her..." (149). Later, she confronts him and expresses her absolute hatred for him: "No mercy shalt thou have, traitor...I will have thy life" (150). Clearly this pledge for revenge is not something she would say if she loved him. Rather, it illustrates the irony in their destiny as eternal lovers. Unquestionably, the author wanted to make it clear that their great dislike of each other would not prevent them from becoming lovers and thus terminate their destinies. The use of free will is not evident here because everything that happens in the first half of the story is in fulfillment of the cycles of predestination.

Another indication of the fulfillment of their destiny occurs while Tristan escorts Isolt to Mark's court. While aboard the ship, Tristan suggests that "...they set apart a private cabin for the queen and her maidens where in none might join them, save only at time Tristan..." (159). This is especially significant because Brangoene, the guardian of the love potion, is there as well. During the one moment Tristan is present in Isolt's cabin and Brangoene has left the potion unattended, Tristan and Isolt drink it mistakenly and thus seal their destiny. However, as Brangoene foretells, this destiny is doomed: "Alas, Tristan and Isolt, for this drink shall be your death" (162). Clearly, their fate is the result of predestination and not free will. Certainly, Isolt had no chance to exercise free will because her father's pledge to give her to the man who slays the dragon must be honored. She has no say in the matter, for if she did, should would not go with Tristan, and their destiny would not be fulfilled.

In examining the establishment of destiny in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, it is essential to have a general understanding of the chivalry and Gawain's traits as a knight of the round table.

Chivalry is...the mode of behavior appropriate to the knight...

chivalric virtues are those that ensure just and stable rule, defense of the existing order, and observance of social form and rank—the virtues of civilization.

Chivalry involves an inherent contradiction between the hero's role as warrior and as courtier....

(Ramsey 3-4)

Gawain's author explains Gawain's virtues:

...he was faultless in his five wits, he put all his trust in the five wounds that Christ bore on the cross...and the fifth five that Gawain had were the five virtues: generosity, and love of his fellow man, and cleanness, and courtesy that never failed, and, lastly, pity, that is above all other virtues.... (343)

It is necessary to remember these virtues of Gawain, and knights in general, to understand the expected and destined behavior Gawain exhibits. In this romance, Gawain acts chivalrously in all he undertakes. This is evidenced when Gawain, after seeing his king accept the Green Knight's challenge, honorably requests, "I pray you, my lord, in plain words, let this combat be mine" (335), and, "...since I have made my request first, grant it to me" (336). It is only proper that Gawain has permission of this lord to accept the Green Knight's challenge. This is exactly what Morgan la Fay had planned would happen. Gawain does not volunteer through free will, but rather is forced because his role as loyal knight dictates he must. In recalling the definition of chivalry and the list of Gawain's virtues, it is clear that Gawain's destiny is governed by forces beyond his control. He cannot remain silent. Instead, he accepts the challenge and says, "A man must stand up to his fate, whether it brings him good or ill" (341). Undoubtedly, Gawain accepts his fate and does not intentionally try to change it, until later in the story.

"The Nun's Priest's Tale, from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, is a mock epic of courtly love that also addresses destiny and the use of free will. However, in this tale, free will is the determining factor in the resolution of the tale. A cock, Chauntecleer, has a dream that he "...saw a beast/that was like a dog and that wanted to seize/my body and kill me..." (387). This dream represents Chauntecleer's destiny. Although it is just a dream, Chauntecleer

believes it to be his fate. Unfortunately, he willingly dismisses it at the insistence of his lady, Pertelote. This dismissal, coupled with the priest's vain description of Chauntecleer, makes it easy to understand how Chauntecleer could succumb to the fox's flattery. Chauntecleer is described:

His voice was merrier than the merry organ/...he knew
by instinct/ the daily movement of the heavens/...his
comb was redder than fine coral/...his bill was black
and shone like jet;/ His legs and toes were like azure/
...and his color like the burnished gold. (385, 387)

Chauntecleer is described as instinctively bright, but this instinct does not serve him well when he first sees the fox. This is seen when the priest says, "...he became aware of the fox...he had no desire to crow then...for a beast instinctively wants to flee/from his natural enemy..." (405). Instead of fleeing, Chauntecleer remains because he allows himself to be seduced by the fox's flattery. In so doing, he has enabled the fate that has been predestined for him to continue playing itself out. After the fox has seized Chauntecleer, it would appear that destiny has been fulfilled, as the priest says, "O, Destiny, who may not be es-chewed" (407). However, Chauntecleer realizes there is a chance to escape and cleverly tells the fox, "Sir, if I were as you, I would say/...'now that I have come to the edge of the wood,/ in spite of you the cock shall stay here;/in faith, I will eat him, and right now at that'" (411). At the moment the fox replies, Chauntecleer escapes from his jaws, and thus ends the fate that has been foreseen. Clearly, this use of free will illustrates that destiny can be avoided. It also shows the importance of the mind behind the use of free will.

The use of free will in "The Nun's Priest's Tale" is critical; as Derek Pearsall says, it is a "...truly philosophical reflection of the condition of man's life, and the part played in it by choice, chance, and circumstances..." (229). Rather than accept his fate, Chauntecleer chose to save himself. He saw a chance to escape by his own use of flattery, as Pearsall also states: "...Chauntecleer escapes from the plight his folly has brought him to by the exercise not of his higher reason, but of his low cunning "(237). Therefore, in this tale, the exercising of free will keeps destiny from fulfillment.

However, in *Sir Gawain, Tristan and Isolt*, and *Perceval*, free will does not prevent destiny from being fulfilled. Rather, it

contributes to it. In *Sir Gawain*, after Gawain's arrival at Bercilak's castle, he accepts Bercilak's proposal to exchange all they have gained over the course of three days. Again, Gawain's role dictates his agreement to do as Bercilak proposes. Only in accepting the green girdle from the lady does Gawain exercise free will. He takes it believing and hoping it will save his life. In doing this, he has stepped out of his role as virtuous knight and into the role of free thinker. When he does not exchange the girdle with Bercilak, he has done just as Morgan predestined. When Gawain thinks only of himself, and saving his own life, he has violated virtues of the worthy knight. As the Green Knight tells him, "...but just over the girdle, sir, you failed a little, and came short in your loyalty..." (385). However, this deceit enables destiny to be fulfilled. Had Gawain acted as he was expected, and exchanged the girdle with Bercilak, he would not have failed and disgraced Arthur's court. Because he acted as he did, however, Gawain willingly accepts wearing the girdle the rest of his life as a symbol of his sin and disloyalty. He says to the Green Knight, "...your girdle...I will wear with the best will in the world" (386). Clearly, the exercising of free will was crucial to fulfillment of destiny.

In *Tristan and Isolt*, free will is evident in the second half of the story, whereas predestination was the major element of the first half. While some of the instances where free will is used are not crucial to the overall story, they do exemplify the situation where free will allows fate to be fulfilled. When Tristan willingly decides to attempt to kill Urgan in exchange for the magical dog, he does so not because he is predestined, but rather to win a prize for his love, Isolt: "Sir Duke...then will I on my part promise shortly to free thee for ever from Urgan, or to lose my life in the trial" (201). This is by one example of the exercising of free will which has no critical effect on the resolution of the story. Instead, the one critical use of free will occurs when Tristan decides to leave Isolt and never return. He says to her, "...now must we part, never again may we rejoice in each other as aforetime" (220). Had Tristan remained, they would both have been killed, so they believed. In departing, Tristan has allowed the cycles of destiny to continue, as they had provided the circumstances necessary to the fulfillment of that destiny. This is seen when Tristan is wounded in battle, and dies just before Isolt reaches him: "But Isolt of Ireland spake no word more, but laid her down on the bier by her lover, and put her arms around him, and sighed once, and her soul departed from her body" (231). The predestination of

their death has been achieved, and free will, as in *Sir Gawain*, enabled it to happen.

In *Perceval*, however, free will is only present when Perceval decides to become a knight. Although this decision is essential as the catalyst for destiny to be established, it does not affect the fulfillment of destiny. It is predestined that Perceval leave his mother and try to return to her. This journey is crucial because during it, both Perceval's and the Fisher King's fates are at stake. Because Perceval is immature, innocent, and inexperienced, there is no chance for him to ever exercise free will as long as he has no reason to act on the contrary. It is destined that Perceval is not the one able to heal the Fisher King. This also illustrates the crucial element of free will: it is only as good as the mind behind it.

It is clear that, in *Perceval*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, "The Nun's Priest's Tale," and *Tristan and Isolt*, predestination and free will play vital roles in the characters' lives. In addition, not only do predestination and free will affect lives, but they profoundly affect each other as well. It has been seen that the exercising of free will can allow predestination to continue, to completely avoid it, or not affect it at all. It has also been seen how predestination can stifle free will or inspire its usage. Certainly, these forces are present in every life and ultimately affect the cycles of life, just as they did to Chauntecleer, Perceval, Gawain, and Tristan and Isolt. Because predestination and free will can have such profound impact on the resolution of life, it is essential to understand how they work in and relate to everyday existence. Only after achieving this understanding can their importance be realized.

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Connie Szawara

Three Trips to the Blue Jay

Every Saturday, whether the bird feeders were empty or whether they were still half full, Edna Ruffee went out to fill them. When her husband had been alive, they had done it together: he had carried the bucket of feed for the larger birds (blue jays, grackles, starlings, cardinals, and doves), and she had carried the bag of thistle seed for the finches (Golden, House, and Purple), but only on Saturdays.

What used to be a delight for her husband was a chore for Edna, but she supposed that the birds needed to eat, and, being the only one left to do it, she accepted the job, just as she had seen to Mike's needs for thirty-four years.

So one Saturday she filled her yellow bucket with standard seed from the fifty-pound bag that she had to get the neighbor boy to unload from her car, and she lifted the small bag of thistle seed onto her hip and trudged out to the feeders at the back of the house.

There were two large feeders for the bigger birds: one slightly larger than the other. The finch feeders (long, clear, cylindrical tubes with holes placed low to the bottom) hung from two young oak trees where she could grab the ends of the feeders and tease them off the lowest branches.

Once she had filled all four feeders and sprayed water into the bird bath as well as onto her geraniums on the back porch, and, after having coiled the hose back against the house, she picked up her empty bucket and her remaining seed and started for the garage. It was on the way that she spotted the blue jay lying just outside the hedges which hugged the front of the house. She placed the bucket and bag inside and then went back to look at the bird lying in the grass.

He lay on his back, his blue and black wings neatly pinned to his side, his tail beneath him, his head moving slightly from side to side, his eyes opening and closing, his feet curling and uncurling, and his legs pulling up against his body spasmodically. A fly boldly explored his white breast.

"Now, what'd you do," Edna said, "hit the window?" The blue jay wrestled for a moment and then was still.

Edna remembered the sparrow that she had seen just a couple of weeks before who had hit one of the living room windows and fallen to the ground. The sparrow had rested there for the

longest time, breathing slowly, in and out, blinking his eyes, and breathing again, until he flew away when she wasn't looking. There had been no fly.

"Well, I guess you won't be screaming outside my window in the morning, will you?" She went back into the house and forgot about him.

Edna accepted that things annoyed her more than they annoyed others: birds singing in the morning, children playing in the street, and dogs barking in the evening. Her husband had bothered her when he read parts of the paper out loud; and, now that he was gone, she still had the same complaints about the dogs and the children, but there was no one to listen. It occurred to her that he may have been relieved to go.

His lung cancer was one of those fast-acting ones; they no sooner knew it was there, and he was gone. He started coughing up a little blood. Up until then, he had seemed healthy enough, except for a little arthritis and the usual aging aches.

For weeks while the doctors ran tests, he stayed in the hospital, and she drove the forty miles every day to see him. She would bring him the newspaper and the mail, or they would play gin rummy, which pleased him because he always won. He had been in good spirits as he usually was, never voicing his fear or his thoughts; she, taking her cue from him, remained silent as well.

It wasn't until after the surgery that they knew for certain that it was cancer, and the doctors felt reasonably sure they had gotten it all. She was as positive and encouraging as she could be, but it couldn't keep him from dying.

What she had hated the most was that she couldn't do anything to change it. All of her life, if she hadn't liked something, she could do something else to change it, to alter it in some way to make it better, more acceptable to her. But no matter what she did, no matter what she wanted, she could not halt his dying. Death she could accept; it was the dying that she hated. Death was final and in the past; dying was always in the present. It was something that had to be endured, and Edna was not good at enduring things.

So she blamed him for not getting better, for not eating when he should have, for not trying hard enough, for frightening her, for turning their lives into a disordered mess, and for putting her into a situation from which she could not escape. She felt as if she were Alice sliding down the hole, gathering speed as she fell, falling and sliding faster and faster into the dark, as if it were she who was dying. Half of the time, he didn't know what was going on, and the other half, he didn't care; but Edna felt isolated,

bewildered, and angry.

After lunch, which nearly always consisted of a bologna sandwich on white bread with a little mayonnaise, she went out to get the mail, and that's when she remembered the blue jay again, on the way back from the mailbox. He lay very still there outside the hedge, his head straight and proud, his eyes closed, his feet still curled up against his body, and his breathing steady and composed.

The blue jay paid no attention to the two flies upon him; it was as if all had a job to do and each was busy about it. Edna stood lost in the scene for a few moments, wondering; then she shook her head and went back into the house.

It wasn't until after supper that she thought of him again, or, rather, allowed his presence to surface again. She wondered if he were dead yet and how he was doing if he weren't. She wondered if the crows had carried him off and hoped that they had. It was a damned nuisance to have him dying out there like that, forcing her to watch, making her feel as if she should do something about it. She'd had enough of death and dying; she didn't need any more. Why didn't the damn bird go some place else to die? When thoughts of him wouldn't go away though, and, after checking to make sure that he was still breathing, she finally hunted through the garage, found the old, blue lawn chair with the dangling strap, dusted it off, carried it out to the front of the house, and sat down beside but not too close to the dying bird.

She wouldn't look at him at first; for the space of fifteen minutes or more, she just sat there quietly, her feet and legs stretched out in front of her, her arms resting on the armrests or in her lap. She listened to the sounds of the lake, to the other birds that sang and chattered in the trees, and to the passing cars on the road. Finally she turned and studied the still figure beside her.

The flies rode the rising and falling chest, and she became aware of her own breathing and her own heartbeat. Her breathing fell into harmony with his, bringing her momentary peace. She knew that he was readying himself, that he was waiting, ignoring the flies or unaware of them, just as he was unaware of her, as her husband had been. When faced with death, living creatures seem to pull into themselves with the wonder of it all, to the exclusion of everything around them.

Sometime later, as the shadows deepened around them, she began to talk, knowing that he could neither hear nor understand her, but just to talk out of a need that had been there for a very long time. She sat with him into the night, talking softly, quietly, exploring life and death and the transition in between.



Susie Halsey

The Twelfth to Die

The young woman lay on the bed in what appeared to be a serene sleep, one leg bent at the knee and drawn up slightly, and her right hand resting inches from her face and almost touching the blond hair fanned forth on the pillow. The patrolman thought there was something diabolical about the careful consideration the killer had shown the dead woman in displaying her as a sleeping beauty, distantly dreaming and awaiting awakening. He walked outside to his squad car.

"17th Precinct, D-David 3541."

"Go ahead with your traffic, 3-5-4-1."

"17th Precinct, this is a coroner's call. This looks like the Mountain Maniac has struck again. Give me the homicide crew out here."

The tall detective glanced at the body of the latest victim of the Mountain Maniac as he came into the room. "Hi, Sam. Who found her?"

"She's a teacher. When she didn't show up for her class, the department head called. There wasn't any answer. Just in case, he called the precinct for a car to make a house check. I met him here. He had a key for vacation checks of the house. We saw her car in the driveway, but couldn't arouse anyone. The neighbor told me he saw her drive in sometime after 11 o'clock last night. She always kept her doors locked and chained but the kitchen door wasn't chained when I got here. I found her myself."

"Same as all the others?"

"Yeah." The patrolman looked up at the grey-haired lieutenant. "He found her again. She has one small puncture wound just beneath her breast. There's a band-aid covering it. Her name was Sutton. Yeah, A. Sutton."

Mark Martin smiled as he glanced up into the camera and greeted his viewers, "Good-evening. At 7 o'clock, there are still no clues as to how entry was gained to the house near Camelback Road where a Phoenix woman was slain last night. Police reports show that the victim was a young teacher. The details aren't being given out, but the police say it is apparent this is the work of the Mountain Maniac. We remind our viewers to always be cautious in returning to your homes. Leave the emergency flashers on in your car while you check for forced entry, and make

a check of your house for intruders. Shut your lights off only when you verify that your home is secure. Lock your doors, use your chains or bolts, and don't open up for anyone except family members and close friends...."

Annette drove north from Mesa until she passed Chasey Morsey Ford; then she turned left at Scottsdale's Goldwater Plaza and drove west on Camelback Road. Traffic was light. The balmy breeze lightly lofted her long blond hair and softly caressed her forehead and left cheek with a feathery touch as it wafted through the partially open window beside her. How nice it felt by comparison with the icy shivers which fear's fingers had sent along the back of her neck a little while ago!

It was almost midnight, so she cautiously kept the driver's side window partly up, and she didn't have the top down on her convertible. For all of her 24 years, she had been careful, almost to the point of cowardice. Her five feet, two inches were well-proportioned, but 103 pounds didn't allow for much muscle. She knew that she could never fight her way out of a dangerous situation. She always had been afraid that her keen intelligence would depart if an attack ever occurred, just as she herself would want to run wildly away. She feared that she'd freeze physically and be a mess mentally in a time when being calm, cool, and collected might mean the difference between living and dying.

At the campus she had just left, the main topic of conversation continued to be how it could be that the maniac who now had raped and murdered eleven young women could continue his rampage without capture. Nobody had managed to figure out how the psycho got into the houses. The police had been advising all women alone at home to lock their doors and admit no one who was a stranger to them for 7 months now.

Not a clue had been discovered concerning the man's method of foiling every safety tactic used by his victims. Each one of the petite young women was found on her bed, carefully dressed in her prettiest negligee and methodically made to look as if she were peacefully asleep, dead. No means of entry was known. The means of the maniac's selection wasn't known, but the target type was too scarily imprinted on her mind by television and classroom chatter. All eleven women had been about her age; in fact, her physical description matched that of all the victims. She knew his next victim always could be her.

That was what caused the hairs on the nape of her neck to be raised on the backs of goose bumps just fifteen minutes ago. One of her students had said without thinking, "You know, Annette,

that maniac seems to be killing you over and over again. All his victims look like you."

She rolled up the window on the driver's side before she reached the intersection of 79th Place, half a block from her house. The outside lights she had left on bathed the front door, her picture window and each of the two windows of the bedrooms, and the strip of lawn out a dozen feet from the house in a zone of safety which she found comforting. She was glad for the absence of shadows near her back door, which really was a side door located almost to the rear of the house on the driveway side of it. That made it easy to carry groceries inside to the kitchen. It also gave her safety during the movement from her car to the security of the house.

After checking the house and noting nothing out of the ordinary, Annette returned to her car and turned off the emergency blinkers. Back inside her house, she locked the door with a sigh of relief. She removed her shoes. How nice the soft carpet felt beneath her feet! Holding her shoes in one hand and a letter and two magazines in the other, she went into her bedroom and sat down at the vanity to read the letter.

The letter from her mother shared good news of her father's promotion to department head at his university and related plans for the two-months-away Christmas visit home that she and her parents already anticipated eagerly. She smiled and was lost in thought momentarily. She was brought back to the present by the chilling sensation of hair being raised along the back of her neck as goose bumps rose. Then she realized what her subconscious awareness had alerted her to: in the mirror she saw a leg attached to the shoe on the floor beneath her bed.

Annette next did what she believed was the hardest thing she ever had done. Smiling still, she said out loud, "I need to bring my briefcase in; then I'll take a bath and get ready for bed." Nonchalantly, she rose from the cushioned seat and walked to the doorway, then out into the hallway, without a backward glance. She sang softly to herself as she unlocked the door and, leaving it open, exited her house.

A glance assured her that the policeman who lived across the street was up, and she ran with the speed that terror gives to his lighted house. Tony Bickel came to the door as the doorbell began to sound. "Hi, Annette. What. . ."

"There's a man under my bed! Get your gun!" She turned him toward his living room with urgent hands.

He drew his revolver from its holster and with a grim expres-

sion commanded his wife, "Call 911 and ask for a back-up for me to capture an intruder at Annette's!" Then he followed her across the street.

She entered the door just behind him and they cautiously made their way across the carpet of the livingroom. To his utter bewilderment, she began to sing gaily as she motioned him toward the left. At the bedroom door, he carefully covered the interior of the room with his glance. There was no one to be seen. Annette brushed by him without heeding his attempt to hold her back. She sank down onto the vanity seat, raised her hands to lift her hair and toss it back, then reached behind her to unfasten the buttons of her blouse. "Yes," she sang, "It's still the same." Beginning to hum to herself, she walked back through the door of her bedroom.

The policeman yelled into the room: "Police! Get your hands out where I can see them, and crawl out from under that bed! He heard a rustling sound and the thump of flesh striking flesh. There was a ragged sob of painful exhalation of breath. The silence seemed to thunder in his ears. He waited.

The flashing squad car lights alternately made the hallway brighter and rose-colored. He called out, "Policeman and resident! We're through the living room and to your left."

The sound of hushed whispers barely reached them. A cop peered around the door into the hallway from a prone position on the living room floor. Another cop stepped into the hallway. Tony knew him.

"Hi, Andy. The intruder is under the bed. I think he's committed suicide."

Andy and his partner leaned over and grasped the foot of the bed as Tony hugged the wall, gun at the ready. He nodded, and they lunged upward with the bed and cast it out away from the wall.

The man beneath the bed lay quietly in what appeared to be a serene sleep, one leg bent at the knee and drawn up slightly and a hand palm upward resting just inches from his face. An icepick handle protruded from his chest. There was no blood to be seen on his beige shirt.

The deputy coroner finished his examination and stepped back. "He's all yours."

The tall detective looked down at the body and examined the effects which had been extracted from the dead man's pockets. The man's business card drew his attention. It said "LOCKSMITH: Keys made for any lock while you wait."

If Dating Is an Art, No Wonder Van Gogh Cut Off His Ear

Prestigious dictionaries, such as Webster, American Heritage, and the OED, have erroneously defined the word “dating” for years; it’s time to speak out against this blatant travesty. I present the following to startle you with its simplicity and amaze you with its clarity.

DATING: (noun) the strange courtship engaged in by those who pretend to be what they’re not in order to attract those who are incapable of being what is expected of them; (verb) the aggressive use of stealth and cunning to snare a human life form.

Taking this new definition to heart, I have finally come to realize that the man of my dreams either does not exist, or does not inhabit this planet. While it’s difficult enough for a twenty- or thirty-year-old to find someone with whom to share meaningful time, it’s impossible when you’re much longer in the tooth. I’ve reached a point in life where my tolerance capacity has dwindled to absolute zero. Gone are the days of demure eyelash batting and quiet chuckling over inane remarks made by a man with the IQ of Drano!

Now don’t get me wrong, I’m not suggesting that I’m perfect by any stretch of the imagination. While I’ve been known to make witty comments to my make-up mirror in the morning, I don’t claim to be Marilyn Monroe—who, for the record, has been as stiff as a carp for over twenty-five years, thereby rendering her an unavailable and ineligible candidate for the dating scene, except, of course, to that minority of men who prefer a VERY quiet, pale woman.

My faults are many. I never realized I suffered from PMS until I had a good day. I thought I was manic-depressive until I realized that I didn’t have any “ups.” I’m getting wrinkles; I buy Oil of Olay in 55 gallon drums. Beneath my designer jeans lurk the genetic jodhpurs I was born with. Just My Size pantyhose aren’t and never will be! But, (no pun intended) I have, on occasion, been

known to exhibit acts of kindness to dumb creatures, usually rendered before I've married them. I'll never win a popularity contest or become Miss America (alas, I can't twirl a baton), but I do possess qualities that might be considered interesting to someone on a weekend pass from the Happy Harbor Home for the Terminally Mediocre.

Meeting the right man has become a major dilemma. It's not that I don't meet men; I do. However, these masculine malcontents usually fill only one of my stringent dating requirements: they're breathing. Let me explain it this way. There are the men I MEET, and the men I WANT. It goes something like this.

I WANT: a working man; a compassionate man; a man with a personality who's able to laugh at himself; a man with real emotions; a man who reads; a man who says, "I'll take care of it" and does; a man who likes music and quiet talks; and a man with whom I can spend time without becoming suicidal.

I MEET: men who cannot sign their names in cursive; men who claim to be "in Antique Cars" when, in reality, they once drove a 1939 Rolls used in a Brink's job; men who think Moby Dick is a body part; men whose driver's license picture has a number UNDER it; men who are unable to express kindness or consideration but are reduced to tears on the 34th day of oyster season; men who believe that they're dazzling me when they only pass gas once during dinner; and men who think that dressing up means wearing clean underwear.

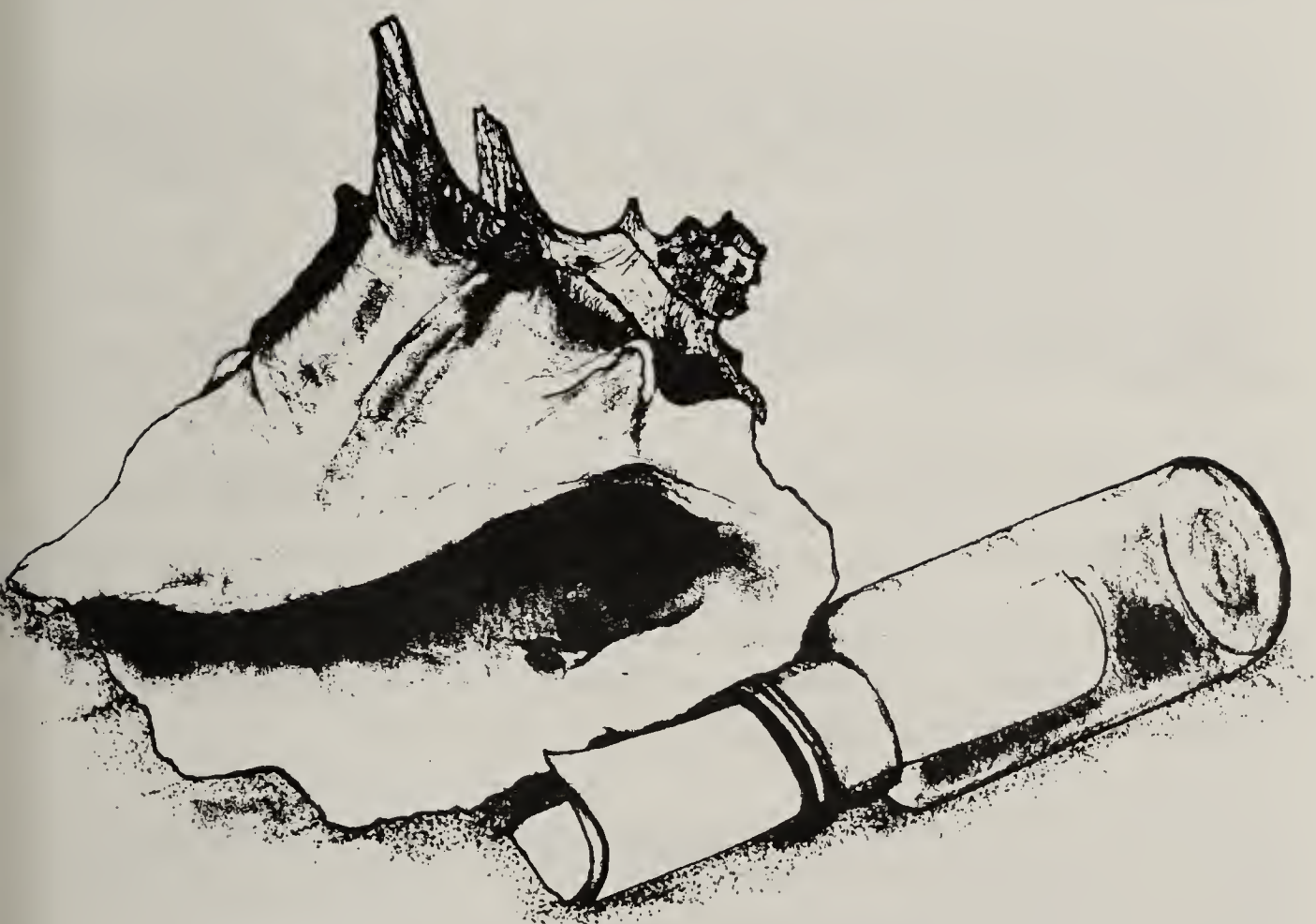
Shall I go on? I'm unhappy with men who prefer their dog's company to mine. I'm repulsed by men who drink too much. I'm leery of men who have canonized their mothers, or who don't have their own bedroom. I'm bored with men who love sports. I'm put off by men who remain madly in love with their ex-wives. In addition to these irritations, there's what I call the COMBO PLATTER: those men who take their dogs, their mothers, AND their ex-wives on a date where they all get drunk and talk about baseball!

My last companion in dateland was such a troll that he owned his own bridge. After meeting his friends, I suggested that they pool their resources and go Condo. He said he'd check into it and thanked me profusely for my keen insight into property development. Troll then, with serious face and slurred speech, confided to me that in the sixth grade Bobby Gropp stole his favorite pencil. This admission of mortal sin ranking right up there with smog abuse was obviously a heavy burden to carry for a man who still had a Roy Rogers wallet. I was unsure of where to go from there.

While he was offering an uncanny and unsolicited explanation of his drinking problem, I nodded my head as if to sympathize with him because slapping him senseless seemed futile. Another judgmental error became obvious when I tried to change the conversation and, during the course of our repartee, it took me two hours to convince him that a stereotype doesn't have two speakers. I excused myself early by explaining that I was scheduled for a lobotomy at 7 a.m.

From what solar system do these males come, and why are they drawn to me? If karma exists, what horror could I have wrought upon others in a past life to deserve this? Brilliant displays of timing seem to put me in the perfect place during the right phase of the moon when these creatures crawl from under their rocks. There's a plethora of these gentlemen, and I'm convinced that some kind soul secretly enrolled me in the Troll of the Month Club. I'll know for sure when I receive my membership card.

Is there a solution to my problem? Are my expectations unreasonable? Have I given myself too much credit for what I consider to be my attributes? Am I just "too hard to please"? Where are all the men the Marine Corps builds? Those chosen few must be living in other states under assumed names. Why won't the Marines build a man for me? What does the corps do with all the spare parts? Are they looking for a Service Rep? Where do I apply? So many questions, so few answers.



Doreen Zepik

About the Authors and Artists

Chuck Adams received his BLS degree with Highest Distinction in December and also holds an Associate's Degree in General Business.

Cynthia Beiswanger, who is 27 and has two young boys, is working toward a Nursing major and hopes to graduate with an English major also.

Susan Bortell, five-year editor of the student newspaper, *The Rapport*, appears in *Portals* for a record fifth time. A BLS student who graduates in May, her writing has also appeared in *Skylark* and *The Other Side of the Lake*.

Gary Davis is a first semester freshman majoring in General Business.

Dean Dibkey, a sophomore, is 21 and majoring in Civil Engineering.

Colleen Garrison is earning her degree in Liberal Studies with a primary focus in the humanities. Among other aspirations, she hopes some day to "reach the top of the pyramids."

Susie Halsey lives with her husband Warren and her son Jarred. She is a newspaper staff photographer and is working towards her degree in Environmental Engineering.

Laura O'Neal, an Elementary Education major, is a single mother and plans to graduate in 1995.

Kelly Pritchett, an Elementary Education and Graphic Design major, has always had a strong interest in art as a means of self-expression.

Terri Russ, who will be a tutor in the Writing Center in the Fall, is an English major.

Andrew Smith has worked at the Michigan City Library for ten years and plans to attend graduate school to pursue an M.A. in Library and Information Sciences. He is an English major in his junior year.

Kristine Smith, who won first prize in *Portals* two years ago, will graduate in May with an English major. She has plans for graduate study. She lives with her husband and four birds.

Connie Szawara is a BLS student whose interests are primarily, but not limited to, science and math. She will be the 1991-92 editor of *The Rapport*.

Susan Vanator is a full-time student, majoring in English and Business; she will be a Writing Center tutor in the Fall.

Sharon White, at age 46, came to college to pursue a Liberal Studies degree, and has been a tutor at the Writing Center for two years. She is a licensed amateur radio operator and balloon flight instructor.

Doreen Zepik is an Elementary Education and Art Endorsement major; she began china painting in high school and has always had an interest in art.

Judges

Faculty Judges:

Dr. Patricia Buckler
Dr. Gene Norton
Dr. John Pappas
Dr. Roger Schlobin
Prof. Barbara Truesdell

Student Judges:

Cheryl Marks
Brent Musgrave
Andrew Smith
Heidi Wesley-Cleveland

(Cover photograph: Connie Szawara)



Connie Szawara